

FUTURIST EMPRESSIONS INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWER: Candacy Taylor
INTERVIEWEES: Nzinga Foreman-Bey & Folasade Bey Al-Rasul
DATE & TIME: August 24, 2012 1:30pm

LOCATION: Futurist Empressions
5706 Thomas Ave.
Philadelphia, PA 19143
267-582-6534
futurist.empress@gmail.com

RECORDING: Marantz 661 – 24/96
LENGTH: 01:29:50
TRANSCRIPT: 21 pages
KEY: CT – Candacy Taylor (Interviewer)
NB – Nzinga Foreman-Bey (Interviewee)
FB – Folasade Bey Al-Rasul

CT: It is August 24th and I am in Philadelphia with Folasade and Nzinga Bey and we are present with their mother and two children. Please start out by telling me your name and how many years you've been doing hair.

NB: I'm Nzinga Bey and I've been in the hair-care business for over fifteen years. I started at Lincoln University, I had to pay for my books and I wore a real short haircut, so I started to twist my hair myself and people started to ask, "Could you do my hair like that?" And I said, "Sure. Ten dollars?" And they'd say, "Okay, no problem." I'd say (to myself) *that's one book*. So then it started to move on and on and I decided that I wanted to do something with holistic healing. Anyone that was sick on campus with anything like a cold or menstrual cramps I was able to use home remedies so I started to sell different herbs to help heal people. So with twisting hair, that's where I started to mix it all together and I said, *I'm going to be a hair specialist*. I fell in love with hair color, hair everything. What I found is that people needed healing and I can help them through their hair.

FB: I'm Folasade Bey. For myself wearing locks [dreadlocks] and having natural hair was a tradition in my immediate family. As a result of the influence of my mother and my father, the desire to teach others, that it's okay to be who you are, has really been with me from a young age. I've had locks since I was three. So the locks I actually wear today are my third set of locks. I went through my little transitions but locks is mainly where I felt most comfortable so that's where I am today. I began training and learning to care for natural hair in more of a professional setting in 2000 and I was about twelve years old. So from the end of my middle school years going into the beginning of my high school years, I was a salon assistant. I actually worked with a sister who lives in Philadelphia as well. She owns the salon Duafe.

CT: So where are you from and where have you lived?

FB: I'm from Philadelphia. I was born and raised in southwest Philadelphia actually within the same area that Futurist Empressions Natural Khrowne Care. That's the salon space we are in today. This salon space was also in southwest Philadelphia about ten minutes driving, actually ten minutes walking from where I was actually born and within that same house was

where my brother was born and the whole family was raised in the later settings from my portion of the family because I'm the youngest of seven.

NB: It's funny that she said "the later settings" talking about the children because again it is seven of us and I come in number four which I'm smack dab in the middle, ten years before me, ten years after me. I grew up in south Philadelphia and until we were maybe eight or nine and that's when we moved to southwest Philadelphia. That's where I spent my homeschooling and all of my teachings within hair-care from Sister Yvette Smalls who lived not too far from us.

CT: Folosade, when you wrote to me you said that, "cultural awareness and knowledge of self is very important in the development of the woman I am today."

FB: Yes it is.

CT: Can you talk more about that and your hair story and how it's tied to cultural awareness?

FB: Okay. Again being the youngest of seven, I'm twenty-four now and my parents were the most influential in my life. From a young age they have always taught me that understanding yourself and feeling comfortable with yourself is what's important. You can look beautiful but you also have to be intelligent and I believe that embracing my hair in its natural way has given me more courage within my self-image and with self-development. My mother was a teacher. She also was very influential within the cultural family of Philadelphia. She sang with two groups who were influential within the cultural setting of Philadelphia so I am basically a baby of promoting those who promoted cultural awareness. We went to rallies. We went to parades. We sang and chanted with our mentors, Mama E. Sister Yvette Smalls. We would sing, "Braid it. Don't burn it." We were a part of that. And even though I was young I didn't fully understand but now as I come into my older years I'm very proud of who I am and I'm very comfortable.

CT: That's amazing. And you had dreads since you were...

FB: Three.

CT: Where there other children around you at that age who also had locks?

FB: Well I can say that because my mother decided to keep me in more natural, more independent institutions, those were institutions that were Pan-African, they dealt with a lot of self and cultural awareness. But I can say that locks...for one thing, Sister E. and my Mom they both understand that locks and natural hair is actually a political statement. And around that time in Philadelphia, I believe the Move people in the '70s? Or was that in the '80s? It was in the 80's. I was born in '88 and I'm twenty-four. The Moves, they wore locks and within the area, they looked at locks as something that was not good looking, they were unruly. We're actually from an Islamic origin, in our understanding of religion, normally we would wear our hair covered but at that time those things were mentioned about the Move People. My mom, she uncovered her hair and from then on she made sure that her children understood that natural hair is important and it is a statement and we're going to teach them that it is positive.

CT: Can you explain the Move people and Mama Africa please?

FS: Mama Africa, she's one of the sisters that I saw a lot of, I actually would go to their house from time to time. [Folosade asks her mother] What was the other sister's name, Mom? Mama Pan-Africa, Mama Ramona. And there was a large group of people, actually a lot of children and they all lived in the house. What happened was, the government, they did not agree with how the families spoke, or how they dealt with living or how they dealt with cultural awareness and with the back and forth, the tassel of them not understanding just them being who they naturally are, the government actually bombed their house, with children and the whole family in it.

CT: Where was this?

FS: This was in west Philadelphia. Old Sage Avenue, not far from here.

CT: Why do you say the "government bombed their house?"

FB: Well actually we have a clip from a CD that my mom created and you heard Mama Ramona speaking of how it actually happened. However the reason they felt they needed to bomb the house...they actually flew over the house and dropped bombs, they started shooting.

CT: When was this?

FS: This was in '80....I can't remember.

CT: Because I've driven through parts of Philadelphia over the last fifteen years that look like something had been bombed.

[in the background the Bey's mother says, "It was a political fight and Africa families they believe strongly that the community should know what their rights are. They were agitated.]

CT: And Move came out of this?

FB: My point of mentioning Move was that my Mom decided even though we were Muslim and she would wear her hair covered, she removed her hair covering because she wore locks and she wanted to show that locks is nothing negative. There's nothing 'dread'ful about locks. It's a beautiful thing, it's something to embrace. It enhances strength within some people. So that's why I mentioned them because being close to them and my Mom understanding who they are it played another portion from another area of our development.

CT: Nzinga can you tell me about your hair story and if it is tied to cultural awareness for you?

NB: Yes, it's very interesting because at one point and time when I was growing up I rebelled a lot. Not that I really know why I did it as a child, but I wanted to not have locks. I did not want to have my hair braided or twisted with Cowrie shells. Cowrie shells are ancient money that we used coming over, I guess it was in Gambia. And a lot of people use them now to adorn their hair, adorn their pocketbooks, jewelry and such. I just thought it was the worst thing. As a child, I was already dark-skinned with slanted eyes, people teased me all the time so as I got older, I understood that I only rebelled because people teased me and with the confidence that our parents instilled in us, I don't know where mine was at that time. So again, growing up even with family members and the schools that I went to, I was homeschooled, but children sometimes can be cruel. The darkest child could say, "Hey

you're a tar baby." And I would start crying so of course I would not want to have my hair natural because that represented something African. Especially having the name, Nzinga. Nzinga was the queen of Angola. I did not understand at that point who I was, why I looked the way I did, why my hair is as kinky as I don't know what [chuckle] and why are these people teasing me. So when I got older and with the teachings from my parents and from Sister Yvette Smalls, she pretty much pulled me in and said, "Listen, this is you." She came and showed me all of these pictures of these beautiful queens all of these different combs, these beautiful children that were adorned looking just like their mother and bona fide Fulani women. I saw another side that made me say, "I am rich in spirit, I am healthy and I am Nzinga Bey." That's funny because I was taught about Queen Nzinga ever since I was young but that didn't mean anything to me as a child. So working with Sister "E," that's what we called her as we were growing up, she, again, helped me to gain that confidence through my hair, through my face, through my eyes, through my skin because I had no understanding of what it was. Even though I had everybody in my corner, my teachers, extended family members and such. I was like *I am not dealing with this at all.*

CT: Were you teased by mostly black or white kids?

NB: I was mainly teased by the black children. I didn't grow up in a real diverse area. When I was out in public I would see people staring at me. And now when I look back, probably some of the adults were thinking, *wow her skin is very beautiful, she has a lot of melanin in her skin, wow her eyes are shaped differently, her hair...* and again, I did not understand that type of beauty so when dealing with society and growing up and going through high school and such, I became different, I became the unique one. So I said, *Hmmm this must be the reason why Mama Yvette said, "You wear your hair the way you do. You walk the way you walk with your head up, you understand who you are."* So I started to get my hair twisted. And then all of the sudden I said, "I don't want it! I want a perm." I snuck and got my perm [laughing] and in Philadelphia I really couldn't do anything because everyone knew. [They said] "That girl done permed her hair. Oh my gosh." Well I wore my Toni Braxton hairstyle for four years, my cousin...we [inaudible] and laid it to the side and it was definitely burnt out and I learned my lesson for four years. Again, Mama Yvette Smalls pulled me in and said "It's no problem, this is how we fix it." So I started to twist and braid it and I went to college and came home and that's when I decided that I want to teach people how to love themselves, love their hair and teach the men how to communicate with their daughters, communicate with their wives, their mother's, their aunts in reference to the hair because in the black community, it's vanity — your hair, your nails and all of that. *I've got to get my hair done, my nails done...* Especially when your hair looks great, you feel good all the way, so that's why I definitely appreciate my culture, I appreciate the knowledge that I have and that's why I always say we are carrying the tradition to the next level because going into this technology world, I want to have on some technical locks. It's gonna happen. So I can make sure that with my daughters growing up that they're able to have the information with not just the styling but to understand why Auntie Folasade wears her locks as she does with red, gold and green, or why does mommy have blue hair and mom doesn't even have locks. You understand? On the other hand, I'm taught that your hair is what you want not...what does India Arie say, "I am not my hair?"

FB: Yes.

NB: But I am blue [laughing] so this is the way I choose and it's not just about locking it's about understanding who you are. I did have pretty much the same teachers that my sister Folasade had and they always told me, "It doesn't matter how you look, if you're not

intelligent, you're not going to get respect, you're not going to understand life." I said, "No problem." And I started to gain more understanding of who I was and what my purpose was.

FB: And may I add really quickly Candacy just because Mommy Yvette Smalls also Sister E, she encouraged me a lot, she encouraged a lot of people in the Philadelphia region, she was one of the elder braiders, she was one of the first within the Philadelphia region and that's why it's so important and why we continue to mention her name, especially with her making transition [passed away] this past April 2012. My mom, when I was younger was able to manage my hair the best way that she could and through my life transitions, I've always understood. [I was] different from my sister I never came away from who I naturally was, I always stayed true and understood the importance of staying true to myself, so never, *never* had any relaxers, any texture-changing chemicals or hair weaving techniques that allowed me to escape the living, tortuous tales of...I call it 'hair scare' because people go through so many transitions of the hair breaking and the hair not cooperating, they have fun for the time that the hair lasts and then afterwards, it's *what do I do?* I have had transitions of my own. I have had braids, but I always came back to my locks and so that experience of cutting my locks twice and doing the braids and coming back to it, it really has led me to realize the understanding that everyone, *everyone* has to walk their own path and it's towards their own personal transitions. So we've all arrived at different ways but to the same point of feeling comfortable within ourselves.

CT: Yes, that was next question to you about the "hair scare" I had made a note of that. So what do you think about people who choose to process their hair?

FB: I think that it's everyone's preference. I have a lot of people that come in to see me and speak with me and they actually go through transitions away from relaxed hair. As long as your hair is natural, it's good hair. If your hair is healthy, it's good hair. The good hair/bad hair situation, I see it as hair that's healthy or as hair that is not healthy, hair that's kept or hair that is not kept. As long as you wear your hair proudly and healthy, you have good hair. I have friends and family members who wear their hair relaxed and that's their preference, but because from a young age, the age of three, my parents instilled in me, stay natural, stay true to it, it stuck with me a lot more than anyone else who have never been there or would eventually go through that transition of becoming natural because natural hair is actually becoming a lot more mainstream in 2012.

CT: What did you think of the documentary *Good Hair*?

FB: [Folosade turns to Nzinga] What do you think sister?

NB: I tell the truth. I honestly think that I'm glad we got past that point. The truth will come to light and it states that us as consumers, us as the black community especially, it doesn't matter, we will pay \$1,000 for our hair. We know the truth. But it's the decision that each individual makes. Personally for that type of crowd, I believe that it was good for them to know, to have the knowledge, because some people did not know it was that deep. Like me, I didn't know it was that deep. So myself personally, we have another video called *Hair Stories* that we grew up on, that story from Mommy Yvette Smalls and I just knew that that would be the first hair movie. I guess you have one for the way of the world and you have one for the people who are somewhat aware or want awareness. I think people who participated in that video, because it's all education, it's still a part of our community it's still part of our culture. Just because I don't wear it that does not mean that I should be mad at that other sister or that brother for paying for that sister's hair. She just does not understand, to me, in my eyes,

she does not understand what it is to actually wear her natural hair and that's what we're here for, to take it to the next level, because it was instilled in us from birth. I am a licensed cosmetologist in Pennsylvania so I can see one side and I can see the other side but the cultural... the natural side is something I'm born with, it's not something I went to school to learn. I went to the school of master braiders, you understand, I didn't go to Berean Institute, which is a black school. I did not learn about natural hair in school, you can't. I don't believe that you can. So to answer that question, I guess I did [like *Good Hair*]. [Nzinga turns towards Folosade] What do you think sister?

FB: I think you definitely answered the question. It is good for speaking towards that specific audience. Within myself, I understand that what we have in terms of natural hair care and the craft of doing it, you really cannot learn it in school and it is something that is passed down even within myself of advancing my education further, just from college, because I graduated from Lincoln University. I now am in Divine Beauty School which is a cosmetology school that helps to give me advancement in another way, but the craft that I've learned within natural hair, within in braiding and locking, they don't really teach you, they don't give you the full effect in cosmetology schools. Not today. Maybe in the future but not as of right now.

CT: What did you think about the controversy about Gabby Douglas' hair?

FB: [Sigh] Oh man, I really, I enjoy Gabby to the fullest. I think that she did a really great job and I think that her capability did not have any influence on her hair. I mean she won the gold. This is the 2012 Olympics. She won the gold medal, by herself and with her team. I think the attack that was placed on her was merely a distraction, she did make history as the first African American, the young girl within the 2012 Olympics to win that gold and I think that distraction came from some people, and they were grown women, to me they had no place picking on a young girl at sixteen years old who was doing such a phenomenal job with something that she's been training for years, hair was the last thing on her mind. Even though we probably could have helped her out, given her some two-strand twists and it would have made her look better [smiling] but she did what she did in her most comfortable way and her hair had nothing to do with her capability of winning that gold medal.

CT: The part that I had such a problem understanding was that her hair didn't look bad to me. So what is it that people had a problem with?

NB: I, again, call me that bad one. It's not so much, *mind your business, leave her alone*, let the young lady do what she's doing, again, within our community, we are taught certain things. No one said, "What type of stance does she have to get to rack up those many points? What is it in her ability to do the balance beam? What does she get points deducted for?" No one asks those questions, I mean, I didn't hear them. I just heard a lot and I tried not to read anything about it I'm the one that say, "Gabby, what do you want to do? Do you want me to say it for you?" I'm a sensitive person; we all can be in different ways. Like my sister said, the young lady, Gabby, she came, she did her job, she's *sixteen, seventeen* years old. That is a *child*. A child, when they go and play, they cry when they have to come in to get their hair done, like I did. "I don't want my hair done. I want to go and play!"

So the thing is on the other side, just as me watching TV, or watching a movie, I believe when they have these makeover shows or when they have anchorwomen of African descent wearing their natural hair, I believe that they should have another type of stylist that specializes in natural hair care behind those scenes so when they do that makeover they

don't take her from her afro. I'm not going to say which show I saw this on, but they took the young lady from her afro and put a wig on her and I did not like it. I said, I could have done way more with that afro, it would have took about fifteen, twenty minutes [snapping her fingers] they could have paid me and I would have been out [laughing]. But with the way of the world, there are not enough hair specialists for those types of shows. They just get a cosmetologist and that's again where we're starting, it's a *tradition*, you *cannot* learn this in school unless it's specified, like my sister said. Not now but maybe in the near future because [exasperated sigh] there's no way to produce those type of feelings, those types of styles, that's why they smack a wig on it. And everyone learns at their own pace. There are different teachings, people on YouTube, people are making stuff up and that's fine, it's really interesting to see how many people are even talking about black hair because again, when I was little people were like "Ewww" you understand? So I understood that then but now I don't expect anyone to be talking about black hair in a negative way, as much money as we're spending, are you kidding me?

CT: That's a good point. I wanted to talk to you little bit about your customers and with the braiding styles, including those that we saw today. How long, approximately do they take?

FB: Well, the client I had Ifama, first I want to speak a little bit about her hair because she's had locks previously and she decided that she didn't want locks so she moved into the relaxer, the relaxer broke her hair off, she came back, she said, "I'm never getting a relaxer again!" And she's fourteen so she's going through this transition pretty young. She said she's never getting a relaxer again but she grew her hair out and decided to press it and straighten it, well her hair did not agree with the heat either. So it didn't agree with the chemical, it did not agree with the heat, so I decided to let her know that we are going to help transition your hair, we are going to help you strengthen your hair. And again, I'm coming back to the *braid it don't burn it*. I braided her hair and told her "Lets braid it and not burn it anymore." Let's heal it. Our transitioning [method] is we grow an inch and then we trim an inch so that as her new growth grows in we're strengthening and we're taking off the hair that is not so healthy because what will happen is that it will break off either way. Where the straight hair meets the new growth of the curly, either the afro curly or the extra curly, however people like to call their hair, where they meet it's weakened because there are two different textures there. So I decided to braid her hair and we actually did weave in a little bit of added hair to do the two-strand twist at the top. The added hair was just to give the affect of bringing it together, she actually did have a little bit of breakage in the middle but within my creativity I braided it up and I covered it in a very creative way while we are strengthening and re-growing her hair. That took me, because of the breakage that we dealt with and the condition of her hair, it took me about four and a half hours. The braids are small and they are a bit intricate but it was more so working with the condition of the hair along with the intricacy of the braids.

CT: I've heard that braiding can take days. Is that true?

FS: Yes. It is very true. In fact in the ancient African traditions, that portion of adorning yourself, it was ceremonial. You took seventeen, eighteen, twenty hours, the sisters would sit in there, you would braid your hair, you may stop, take breaks, you come back but that was the process of the ceremonial transitions they were going through...they were growing, they were strengthening themselves. We actually took pride in ourselves, in adorning ourselves, in every way, even within the ancient times. That's how the cornrowing and the individuals and the Senegalese twists, they were passed on from. Again, a tradition being passed on and now at Futurist Empressions, we're taking it to the next level.

NB: Yes, I definitely and totally agree. It depends on what type of styling that we're doing for the actual individual. The style that I worked on today for Kaida Flowers, which is my best friend in the whole world, she has locks and she's had them for over ten years. So when she walked in, I looked at her and said, "That's a bona fide, ceremonial woman." And she's always what I call "fly." She's a fly African chic, right? [Folosade laughs] So when she had the necklace on with the small beads from Kenya, to me that represents loyalty. When we're talking about the number of beads on each length, the number of lengths there are, you know the color, okay? Everyone in the community will not have those colors, will not have those beads, or the hairstyle that I did on her today. I put raffia in her hair, it was orange raffia, to match her the colors that were in her garment. So when you look at her with the raffia wrapped around the bantu knots that we placed in the front of her hair because when you look at her it's like [a pause that commands attention] "Yes ma'am." You cannot hold your head down and try to look at this particular style. When you look at it, it represents royalty. Then I placed the fishtail African braid in the back and I wrapped that also with raffia and added just a little something we like to tweak called pipe cleaner [chuckle] just for fun. It was yellow and I gave her a yellow feather. I put it off to the side a little bit because that shows that she's the queen of her house. And she's the queen in reference to the village and when she walks outside everyone will look at her, *everyone* will look at her, even the animals and insects. Everyone will look at her because they understand that queen status and that's what I love to create. When people get up out my chair, they say, "Yes, I am queen." Or "I am king." Because that's who we are, again carrying the traditions to the next level. Everyone doesn't know it but they'll get it.

CT: Have either of you ever been to Africa?

FB: Yes, I actually have traveled to Ghana. It was a beautiful experience. I graduated from Imhotep Charter High School and in my sophomore year, the school actually took me with them. The staff went and it was just myself and two other students. I was part of the African drum and dance team, I was part of the choir, the cheerleading and I was so involved in the school they decided it was better for me to go and experience who I am and our tradition at another level. So we went to Ghana, West Africa and we stayed out there for about two and a half weeks and it was amazing. I'll tell a funny joke, I was talking to a friend on the phone within my preparation for my travels and I told him, "Oh yeah, I'm going to Africa so I probably won't see you for a while." And he's like a next door neighbor's son, that type. And he said, "Oh wow. You're going to be the only one wearing clothes and I said, "What!?" That's just the thought process that some people take when they see "Africa" because of the pictures, the things that they see, [it's] the way Africa is presented. When I went over there they were just a welcoming and helpful. I was staying out in an apartment on the beach and there was a sister who worked there and she was sweet and cleaning up and clearly I could tell she didn't speak English but she spoke gesture, she spoke body language. So I'm trying to take my luggage over to the bus, I'm dragging, I'm pulling. Now there's one thing that she did that my Mom has done for years. She walks over and she looked at me and just smiled, she grabbed my bag that I was tussling with she put it on top of her head and walked it over to the bus for me, now you will not get that type of treatment in Philadelphia. They will look at you and laugh. "Look at this girl tussling!" So the welcoming feeling that they gave me...My Mom would do that, she'd walk ten, twenty blocks with an ironing board on her head, a young lady would follow her for ten or twenty blocks, just to see if she would drop it, because she didn't use her hands, she didn't use anything and that's a part of the tradition from Africa that she brought with her and passed it on to us. But that sister over there was so helpful and I was so appreciative, I'm in my head thinking *thank you so much*. So just to let you know, they don't treat us bad, they don't look at us different, it's all within that person's thought process of

how they were taught to deal with people, just like you have people here, some people are nice and some people are not. It was a great experience.

NB: Myself personally, I've never been to Africa physically, I've been to other islands, but I haven't made the trip to Africa yet.

CT: I'm assuming, especially with braids or hairstyles that take a long time to do, I'm assuming that you hear a lot of stories and probably get pretty intimate with your customers?

FB: Yes.

NB: And see that's what we were saying earlier, when we were saying that I take care of our grandmother's hair, she's [to Folosade] what is she seventy...?

FB: Eighty-nine.

NB: I'm sorry, I was going to say seventy-eight, that's what she told me [laughing].

FB: She told us that for a long time. She lied about her age [laughing].

NB: Ok, grandma is eighty-nine, and she had nine children, and I think my mother is the first or the second, I'm not exactly sure but I do her hair every two weeks. I comb, I brush, I shampoo, her hair is silver, silver, silver and I shape her up in the back. As we're talking I try keep her in my chair for as long as possible, so she can tell me more stories. I've learned so much about the family. I learned that when she had my uncle Ronald, he has passed, she used to pump her milk so that she could feed the other children that their mother's could not feed because my grandmother had so much milk. Now if that's not community? I didn't have to know that, she didn't have to tell me that [laughing] she pumped her milk for another woman's child, maybe in 2012 that's unheard of. A lot of children and I say children because more young women are having babies, but they're not taught to breastfeed. And when they're not taught to breastfeed it's another formula or something like that and to me that takes a little bit away at a young stage, the youngest and the eldest needs more nurturing, so when the youngest is coming into the world, the elder should nurture that child by breast feeding them, that's what I was taught. So with doing my grandmother's hair every two weeks, it is a wonderful feeling and when she steps out and people say, "Hey, Miss Ruth!" She lives in a new development in south Philadelphia on Fifteenth [street] and Fitzwater [street] around the corner from the Clef Club so everyone in the neighborhood knows her even Mr. Kenny Gamble recognizes her as one of the elders in the community that's how well respected [she is]. She sits on her step and people ride by [and say] "Miss Ruth, how you doing? I love that hair." And she says, "Thank you!" Again, learning what we can from the elder, whether it's from my client that's an attorney, our clients that are teachers, we're learning something from them. What we are taught within the tradition, we cannot get that in cosmetology. We are taught [in cosmetology school] to not talk about politics, don't talk about anything else, just hair. But when you're talking with your grandmother, you can't tell her what to say [laughing], I know I wouldn't. I let her talk because she's 'locking' in the future into me that's why with the workshops that we do at the Philadelphia Locks Convention is called, "Locking the Future," because we need to pass this on to the next generation. I have two young daughters, so we have to pass this on.

CT: That's beautiful. Can you tell me if there's a different process of dying locks versus what you learned in cosmetology school on how to dye hair?

NB: One thing that we're doing in Futurist Impressions and with me being a colorist is changing the terminology. The perfect, not even the perfect, I would say the correct terminology is [to say] "to color." Because you dye clothing or someone dies or transcends so when we say "adding color to the hair" we specifically say "color" it's something that I learned, as far as what's in the cosmetology book, I would have to research that because honestly, I don't know.

FB: When someone says, "Oh I'm going to wash my hair." My teacher presently says "you gonna what?" Because you *shampoo* hair, you wash clothing, you wash your shoes, you wash the floors but you shampoo your hair. Even when talking to the community there are other terminologies that we would like to change, just to make things softer and make things more acceptable in understanding those terms.

NB: And that's why we say we like to educate you on your hair as we're doing it. My opinion for coloring locks, if you are a colorist then you know exactly what you're doing, hair is hair to me, I've been a colorist for about four years now. I colored my sister's locks [Folosade], we did red, gold and green. It's very beautiful. Her hair is not falling out. The color is fading so we always have to retouch the color.

FB: The other day I just put a little on top of it, but it still fades when you shampoo it, because the color she put on top is actually a semi-permanent.

CT: Did you have to bleach it first?

FB: Yeah she did have to lift it.

NB: Well actually, I don't bleach locks. When you bleach hair, it strips it, it damages it, it eats it up just like bleach would eat up your jeans. We used to try to color our jeans back in the day and you wind up having one strand of material because you left it in too long so the same thing can happen to the hair. But if you are a colorist then you know how to color any texture of hair so there are a lot of precautions to take when coloring natural hair versus straight hair. Or there's a difference when you're coloring hair from it being jet black to wanting to make it blue or coming from a blonde and wanting to make it green. So as long as you know the color chart, and that is true in cosmetology, there's no going wrong. But what we do here is that we have to make sure your hair and scalp are healthy. I don't even talk to you about color. If you come in here and say, "Oh, the braids took my hair out on the side, but I like that blue, can you make my hair blue?" And I say, "We're not talking about color until we take care of your hair that's thin on the side. I don't want your mind to tell your body that because your hair is not going to grow. Let's talk about growing this hair back on the side and then we can talk about coloring it." When your mind is thinking, *I want my hair colored, I want my hair colored...* Then the hair is never going to grow. Again it's all within the body, within the person's mindset with the way they wear their hair.

CT: But do you still use the same chemicals?

NB: With some textures of locks, yes. With chemistry...sometimes it's standard but I have what I like call, "tweaking it." Because Ms. Blue is all blue so therefore when I'm coloring your hair, I'm putting *my* touch on it but I am following the rules. I'm following the basics so that's why I take other classes and try to advance my understanding in hair color. We attend hair classes every year.

FB: IBS International.

NB: Yes, IBS.

FB: That's in New York.

NB: And I choose to go do that being a hair specialist, not just a locktician, or a person that does natural hair. Hair to me is hair and I have fun with it. I can cut anyone's hair, color anyone's hair as long as it's healthy.

CT: What do you say to stylists who don't have experience doing kinky hair? Because hairstylists who know black hair understand that hair texture and can determine what is really healthy hair and know what processing the hair can take or not. If they don't have the experience, should they just not do it?

NB: I personally think that if a person wants to learn something then they're going to go do that research, if you want to know how to take care of kinky hair or straight hair or Oriental's hair...I would suggest you learn about that culture. You learn why is their hair this way? Why is this person's hair kinky? Why is it wavy?

CT: Do you learn that in cosmetology school?

FB: You do learn that.

CT: But would you trust them? It seems like it is the *experience* that makes people more comfortable working with a certain texture.

NB: I believe that. I'm a person who does research. If it's not within our community, sometimes people don't like stepping outside, which is why I always tell clients and people who I've mentored to do their research. Don't limit yourself if you want to be in the hair care business. If you're a cosmetologist — they do nails, they do massaging.

FB: Estheticians.

NB: Yes, estheticians. But within the black hair care business um...I'll let my sister answer that because sometimes I have issues [laughing].

FB: I will say that just in learning with schools, higher education and in life you're always taught to do your research, you're never taught to just go off what someone says. You have to use more than one source. So again, like my sister said, if that's something that's your passion you're going to research and understand how to cater to that specific group of clientele or that specific person who has that texture or type of hair.

CT: I understand. But the *reality* is where there is a disconnect... I've been to fancy hair salons and they've ruined my hair and I had to cut it all off because she didn't know what she was doing. But she had great intentions and wasn't afraid to deal with my hair, there was no racism there or anything. The idea of someone doing that kind of research, I don't think they would ever know as much as you know because of your tradition.

FB: Yes, because of our tradition, it has been passed on.

CT: It's a very challenging dilemma, I don't want to celebrate or encourage separatism where people of a certain race should only have their hair done by that race, but it's a logistical problem, so how do you get around that? I just interviewed a Sicilian woman who does mostly black hair because in Sicily they have kinkier hair, so she's more familiar with that texture and she does amazing hair for black women. I think you're answering the question fine, I just wanted to have a discussion about the reality. For instance if an Asian person came to you wanting your hairstyle, what would you tell them?

FB: It would be very difficult unless they had some mixture down their bloodline it would be kind of difficult to get an afro-look unless we're adding hair. Some people believe that the Orientals or Caucasians cannot have locks, but see some of them that are cultivated and within our research and our understanding, it's the techniques that we're using [that can make it possible]. There are different techniques used for different texture or comfortability within their styling. So that's that portion of our research for us being able to cater to Caucasian, Oriental, those different kinds of hair textures who also want locks or braiding styles.

CT: Do you have any?

NB: I had two Asian clients. I did one, this was when I first started to do hair and he wanted his hair locked, so I interlocked his hair.

CT: What does that mean?

NB: It's another technique that you take the hair, two strands of hair, and you lock it in together. And I'd have him come back once every two weeks. I would shampoo, condition his hair and see what condition his hair was in. It's kind of like the same I would do with Folasade's, we want to make sure it's well rounded, molding it together, we want to make sure that it's neat for that particular texture. I would not be able to do Folasade's hair the same way, let's say Candacy's hair. My other client, he was Caucasian and he wanted to have locks so what I did was that I had to make his hair kinky. So there are certain techniques that you have to use to even think of *wow what am I going to do with this person's hair who wants locks?* So of course you cannot use the same technique on one person as the other, some people you are able to.

CT: So how did you get his hair to lock?

NB: It took time. It took a very long time because his hair was not used to being curly.

CT: How do you make it curly?

NB: I molded it with my hands [laughing] and every day when he came back I would twist and twist and twist. I would take two strands and lock it in and lock it in and twist and twist until it seemed like his hair started to bud.

FB: It's like a matting process that the hair goes through as well. As it mats and matures we cultivate it and round it and sculpt it into that cylinder look as much as we can with our hands, so most of it is done with our hands.

NB: And he wanted color so I put green in it. I was like, “yay!” His hair was already blonde so I just added the green semi-permanent to his hair. He loved it. He was a bartender. He was a young guy in college. I was doing his hair for about three years and then I left that shop and that’s when I started my own business. Sometimes I do look for him and think I would like to see him one day. I know that that particular texture it seemed like it started to grow in another way of what it was before I started to lock his hair. His mind was of locking, so it told his body, so his hair started to act different. That’s what I experienced when doing that young man’s hair even versus the Asian’s hair. The Asian’s hair, it locked faster because I used a different technique. Isn’t that amazing [laughing]. I just saw your face [expression], *like what?* I never know until I’m in the person’s hair. That’s why we love consultations. They are so important.

FB: And highly recommended.

NB: Yes. Especially for color or anything like that. So we’re not afraid of any type of texture, we choose to further our education. We want to be able to “lock it” in the future.

CT: That’s great. I want to talk about the physical labor of the job. Do you feel like any parts of your body are more affected than others?

FB: I think my back.

CT: Your upper back or your lower back?

FB: My lower back. And I can definitely say more so my hands because of the twisting motions that I’m constantly doing. The wrist area, a lot of hairstylists get carpal tunnel syndrome. But our mentor, Sistah E. she taught us a lot, she told us to take those vitamins, get those massages, use those paraffin wax.

CT: What do you do with paraffin wax?

FB: They actually use it in salons as well. It’s a wax that is heated up in a bowl. It’s solidified at first but when it’s placed in [the bowl] it liquefies. You place your hands in down to your wrist and it starts to coat your hands. When it dries you actually feel the difference from when it’s placed on, it’s really warm, so when it cools off and it dries, you peel it off and you do it every few weeks.

CT: What does it do?

NB: It’s like a moist heating pad, it’s like another fun way to get a manicure.

CT: Is the paraffin wax the wax that is also used for waxing, or is that different?

NB: No, but you will find it in your spa. Hair salon? Maybe. Depending again...going back to the culture. We, the black community, may pamper themselves another way, whereas another community may do it differently. But in most black hair salons you don’t see paraffin. I haven’t seen it.

FB: You don’t.

NB: Yeah, if I go to the spa maybe in [New] Jersey, or when I go to the show, I say, "Wow, we've got to get some paraffin," because it's like a moist heating pad for your wrists and such, you can use it on your feet also. I would recommend it. Get the mango.

FB: I like the lavender too.

CT: [To Nzinga] What about you? Do you have any physical...

NB: I was going to say my back due to my age but my sister, she's eleven years younger than I am.

FS: I've been working. I'm telling you, I've been working hard to pay these school bills and to live and to keep my clients comfortable. I put so much energy and love into it that it takes a little away from me which is why Sister E. says, "You've got to treat yourself too girl. Go get those massages and make sure you take care of yourself because you have a long life. You have to continue to keep people beautiful in that creative way and keep that energy up."

NB: Yeah, and people depend on us, we don't know it, and I'm told this all the time that a lot of people depend on us. Either it's just to make them look beautiful-er, I always say "er" and like you said, some people just need to talk, some people come to get away from the outside world, close their eyes, relax. But it is one thing again, for the community, a lot of people depend on us for style. I know back in the day people went to the barbershop and the beauty salons to see what the new style was. People always came and showed us what the new stuff was or we went to a show and said, "Ok, that's how they wear their hair now." "Oh, those the new kicks? Ok." That's part of different cultures.

Going to the back. I always say stretch, stretch, stretch. I've been stretching every day since I injured my back two weeks ago. I would say stretching, doing massaging, meditating, cleansing yourself, meaning cleansing your day. There's a lot of energy being poured into you as well as you're pouring energy into other people so you have to take that time whether it be at the bottom of the step or in front of the bathroom door, because if you don't when you wake up tomorrow and you have to service those seven clients, those two people that need hair color, that one person that has thinning, alopecia, okay? You have to be able to have that face, have that body, have those emotions and that culture mindset so that when you start doing their hair, they'll feel that energy. It's energy being pulled back and forth, especially with locks. You see those locks sticking up? That's their antennae [laughing], like *hey, I'm over here*. My sister's locks now when I saw that hair is supposed to be rolled up and I saw one at the bottom, it's like *here I go*. It's always one. Those are your antennae. Yeah, taking care of your body, do you hear me cracking now? I would say stretch, stretch every night. It's very important. Wear comfortable shoes for support, lots of back support.

FB: Vitamins and water. Especially with how much of our body is made up of water. Water is very important as well.

CT: You said that you have a lot of African and Caribbean clients. What's the general breakdown, do you have first generation Africans that come here?

NB: Now that's interesting.

FB: Wow, it's so diverse within the African community, we have some who are actually from the continent. We have some, which we call ourselves, Africans who are born in America,

which other people refer to them as African Americans and then we also have Caribbean-Americans who are born here but have Caribbean descent. We even have some who have a mixture of Spanish and African so there's really a mixture of people. What do you say sister?

NB: The only time I find that I have a real diverse clientele is if I'm hired on the outside to do a show, maybe a fashion show, or like if you're having a birthday party or a retirement party and you have five bartenders and ten servers and we just have twenty people walking around and handing out gifts for the guests. So I would have to have all of those models names, their pictures of their hair so I would know what I'm doing. Those are the only time I really have a diverse crowd. I advertise myself as a colorist. I don't always say, *I'm here and I only do this*. I have one card for color and another card for other specialties that I do because if I do research then that means I want to service you. I can say I'm good because it's important to me that the person not just understanding that they're wearing blue hair color. They're coming back to get their hair moisturized so it does not fall out because I have one of the high-maintenance hair colors. So if it's another type of texture, their hair may not be able to hold the color like my hair does. So therefore, I have to make sure they come back and I have to nourish their hair. I did a party for Red Bull a couple of years ago and surprisingly it was a blue party. That was easy [laughing]. So I took my suitcase, I was another person's assistant and I had my assistant, we all worked really well together. It was at the Seaport Museum in Philadelphia at Penn's Landing. It was futuristic blue party. That was so easy, we had so much fun. But it was a lot of Hispanic and Caucasian. These people from the Red Bull party, they partied all night, because I guess it's the energy drink? I was so tired. I said, "Ok, I'm blued out." That's only time when I can say I had a real diverse clientele, or in hair school.

FB: Right. So basically the larger percentage [of their clientele] is African, African-American, Caribbean, all of those come from that African descent. So like 95% of our clientele is of that culture.

CT: What, if any, cultural rituals happen here?

NB: Wow, we've had a number of young ladies who have done rites of passage. I remember...not so much a ritual but when I started my daughter's locks, it was my sister, Folasade and I don't remember the other young lady's name. We were at our shop where we were just starting out to do hair. And there was like three people sitting around Egypt [her daughter]. I was getting my hair done or I was working? Was I working?

FB: I think you were working.

NB: Yeah, I think I was working and it was Egypt's third birthday. My sister was like, "Okay, it's time to do it."

FB: Yep.

NB: We sat down as was talking to her and she didn't cry or anything. Now she's twelve and she wants to do something different with her locks. So my sister Folasade is going to help along with my myself and my mother gradually get her to that stage of whatever she wants to do with her locks because she's going into another stage of her life. She's had her hair in locks since she was three. I've done different things with them, meaning cutting them into a style but for right now, they are the ones that can really guide my daughter because I guess it's different when you're the parent [laughing].

FB: A lot of preparation for marriage ceremonies. We have a lot of fun with it because the brides will come and if their hair is natural but sometimes the funniest portion is when we have people who are in the bridal or wedding party and they'll have natural hair but the bride or the groom does not. Well I can say that I'm faulty of making their hair so beautiful that they actually take away from the bride. I did not mean it. I just have fun. I love what I do. You tell me it's for marriage, it's for a couple coming together and I automatically think, *fabulous, beautiful, encouraging*. So when I do those different intricate styles mainly with the locks and the braiding, they look at the hair and people are taking pictures of the hair that I've done, they're not even taking pictures of the bride [laughing]. We even had a client that came and she said, "They were looking at me because she chose me to be in the wedding party but I'm the only one that has locks."

NB: And she was the sister of the bride.

FB: She was the sister of the bride and she said, "I know y'all going to hook me up. Y'all do what y'all do. And I'm going to go there and they are going to see my hair." And they doggone sure did [laughing].

NB: Keisha's ghetto. And she'll tell you, "I'm ghetto. I'm from south Philly." But the great thing about that was everybody was like, "What is she gonna do? What is she gonna do?" [with her hair]. And she kept saying, "Y'all worry about yourself. They got me." When Keisha went in there [laughing] and when she came back in the next two months to get her hair done, because we colored her hair. I gave Keisha a lighter, honey blonde this time with some streaks, I think I did white, or yellow, I can't remember...

FB: Rods, curls...

NB: Keisha came in and said, "Look y'all... all the pictures. Who hair look better? I told y'all." You actually looked at the wedding party and you could tell the same person did everyone's weave. I looked at Keisha and I just smiled and nodded because she was right. Everyone was worried about her hair to the point where they couldn't even take care of their own hair. It was so funny. Keisha was so animated. She kept saying, "I told 'em don't worry about me. I got this!"

FB: I even enjoyed a friend of mine who I graduated from college with. We did the husband and wife's hair and they both had locks, very beautiful and long and my sister did a nice up-do and I did the style for the male, very conservative but still very stylish. And they looked so beautiful together and they enjoyed it so much. So we do all that. People who are in the ceremony, the people who are not, people who are transitioning...

NB: You've got to tell that story.

FB: Oh, I'm faulty again. I had a client, I did his hair for his wedding but prior to his wedding, I did his hair for someone else's wedding. His hair was fabulous even the photographer at the wedding was taking pictures of him and everyone was coming over to his table asking him about his hair. And I said, "I did not mean to get you in trouble." We were just having fun. His hair was so healthy and full. Well when he got married, I'm going to tell you what his wife said. He came in and I said, "Great. I'm so happy, you're getting married. This is another step for you. This is great. What are we going to do with your hair? I'm excited. He told me his wife said I don't want your hair looking better than mine!" [laughing] So we had so much fun and we encourage and excite people so much that sometimes they say, "I need you to calm down

a little.” That’s just getting rid of that whole understanding that you can’t do much with locks, but with locks and natural hair, you can do so many things with it and have so much fun with it. We prove it everyday.

CT: I guess you understand how rare you are because I have never seen hair like this until I started researching this project. I’ve never seen it on the street. I’ve never knew it was possible.

NB: That’s interesting.

FB: It is, because this is all I know.

NB: That’s why we always say “we’re taking it to the next level.”

FB: It’s our tradition.

NB: We have different paths but we have the same goal. You look at me and you’re like *okay*, and you look at her [Folosade] and think that’s more conservative. But she can go there too. Don’t get it twisted.

FB: Yeah, we’ll stitch it up.

NB: But the thing is we don’t know anything else. It’s like we don’t even know how to answer or comment on what you said because it’s just what we know. You understand? And we want to learn more.

CT: I think this is an interesting time, especially within the black community. I don’t know if you saw Oprah’s magazine, but she’s wearing her hair “natural” on the cover.

NB: Hmmm okay.

FB: Oh, I wanna see that.

CT: I don’t know how natural it really is but it’s beautiful. It’s big and has lots of curl.

NB: One thing I would love for the community to not be so careful about...it’s an understanding. What is natural? What is organic? Are you natural or are you organic? What do you want your locks to do for you? What is your purpose? My hair is not natural. It looks natural, doesn’t it? But I’m not naturally blue. Otherwise the person would say I have natural hair, but technically, I don’t. Who made it like that? I don’t know, I don’t really care, I’m not trying to be like that, on the other hand, it’s what exactly is natural? And understand where the black hair care community is going. Where is it going? Who’s taking it there? Who’s calling it natural? Who’s calling it organic? Who’s calling it locks? Because I have locks...locks of hair and so does Folosade and so do you. So that’s what we’re understanding and when people come to us and we understand or know their point of view in reference to hair, that’s why we get right on it. We’ve got to change that terminology. I have a three-year old daughter. I have a twelve-year old daughter. They can’t get older and say, “Oh wow, that gymnast was good but look at that nappy hair.” You can’t do that. It’s not right to do that. You understand? So I think that’s where it comes from and where it’s going, it’s in our hands. So that’s why we’re taking it to the next level.

CT: I just think it's interesting because it seems like from the interviews I've been doing and the research I've been doing, it's safe to say that most black people are starting to embrace their natural texture. But at the same time you've got the popularity of the Brazilian Blowout and people are saying that's toxic but is it more or less damaging than relaxers? I've interviewed Dominican hairstylists that say the Brazilian Blowout was made for that type of hair because there is kinky hair in that culture but it's also mixed with South American or Latin hair which also has a different texture and it can handle the flat ironing and all that extra processing.

FB: Can I give you an example? Within Philadelphia, just within these past few years, we've seen a lot of the Dominican hair salons come into the community and because we have a nice percentage in this region who likes to wear their hair straight, they would try to come away from the actual relaxers but they still move towards the heat. Well, those Dominican shops use that same heating process which actually is too much for our hair, our kinks, and what happens is it actually breaks our hair off. It brings it down and weakens it so much because they see the flow and the straightness, but after a while, like you said, our hair is not meant for that type of heat, that type of technique it actually breaks our hair. So that goes back to research. When you come into a community of people who have these textures of hair you have to understand what their hair can actually take, what's the technique that's actually needed to get the same result that you're trying to give them. If you walk around in Philadelphia and you see the straight [hair] and you see the damage that has been done. It's only because of the lack of knowledge, lack of research. So once we open our minds, like my sister said, "We learn at our own pace." Once they get to that stage where they say, "Wow this is not working, let's try something else." Maybe they will still be able to continue successfully in a more careful way that's still healthy for our hair.

NB: Yeah, it's interesting for me because like I said, it's not so much that I play sides but I look and I say, *Been there done that. They'll be back.* Because it is a level of understanding who *you* are and why *you* wear your hair that way. I don't press my hair, the only thing I may do is blow dry it out just to see what it will do. I know it's not going to break off because I give it moisturizing treatments, I treat my color and then I treat my hair itself. But like my sister said, the heat *is* too strong for *our* hair. We come from a heated climate so it's not something that we needed, that why we had the wooden pick to take care of our hair with love and harmony [laughing].

FB: That's right. And I've done research on certain weaves and you want to take information from different sources, I've come across the understanding of the scientific development of our hair, why it comes out of our scalp in that spiraling motion. Some understand it to be that same force that spins and rotates the planets and the universe, it's the same force that makes our hair spin when it comes out of our scalp so that strength that we actually have in the curl pattern in our hair. Some people don't understand it and don't know why it's better to embrace it and why it's better to braid it and not burn it [laughing].

NB: [laughing] That was a good one.

FB: I love you Sister E.

CT: That was beautiful. When you say "Sister E," I know you're talking about Yvette Smalls but how do you want that transcribed?

FB: Oh, it's S-I-S. E. That's how we say it but you can put Yvette Smalls.

CT: I'd like to write it how you say it because it speaks to how well you knew her.

FB: She also had the name Kinyozi. We have mirror here that we use for our clients and when we show it to them, she actually wrote her name on the bottom of our mirrors. And Kinyozi means "one who dresses hair." So that's another name she goes by. But we know her as S-i-s. E, capital E.

CT: Is the first "S" capitalized?

FB: Yes. It's "Sis. E."

NB: But I would say maybe put Yvette Smalls in parentheses and like you said, Kinyozi, the Philadelphia Folklore Community project, they call her "Kinyozi"

CT: Can you spell that?

NB: Yes, we want to make it right. A lot of people who have done blogs on her were using Kinyozi. So she is Sister Yvette Smalls Kinyozi E. Sis. E.

[Folosade brings a mirror out] So on the mirror it actually says...

CT: Kinyozi.

FB: Now on here she wrote it as, "Sistah E." But the way we saw it was as Sis. E. And she wrote, "Sistah E. from Ph. D. because that's how she was. I love her.

NB: Now that's another thing, she was not my teacher in home school, she was my teacher within hair and my sister went to school with her son. So in saying that it was another type of "sister" meaning that was my Mom, "sista" you understand? S-i-s-t-a. But I would not dare call her sista. It was "Mommy Yvette." I grew up calling her "Mommy Yvette." When people would say Sista E. I was like, "Who is that?" [They would say], "You know, the 'braid it don't burn it.'" You mean Mommy Yvette? Or Mama Smalls? People were like, "Hey Mama Smalls." It's the terms and where you came from. People may call me "Cats," they'll say, "Hey cat eyes" then you know that's from High School. Or if a person says, "Oh hey blue" then that's from me being in this career. Even with Folosade.

FB: Right even myself, I was born with seven names. When I went to college, it was "Oh, Bey." That's my last name. "What's up Bey? How you doing Bey?" And transitioning into my own life and coming into the movement I'm dealing with in my career, I'm Folosade. Sade means "the khrowned one." So, Folosade is one who takes care of peoples' khrown (crown), who helps to heal the crown. It fell right into it. You know, "Futurists" is someone who is encouraged by positive change. Someone who works with the khrown. We're talking and we're encouraging a change in the future as we are working on your khrown. That in my transition and the different names that I'm known by.

CT: And you want crown spelled with a "K"?

FB: Yes, with a "K". I can just simply say it's from the African alphabet. K came from K-e-m-e-t or K-h-e-m-e-t, which is the ancient name from Egypt. It's "k" because they did not use some of the other letters. So "k" was that letter that they used instead of "c."

CT: Wow, I am learning so much. It's been such an honor to be here and to meet you. I had high expectations but this experience was beyond my expectations.

FB: Thank you so much. It was my pleasure to work with you because even when my sister said, "locking the future." This is us putting in that history, making sure that it continues. If Sister E. was here you would probably be talking to her. We would have probably been there as well, but you would have heard a lot of the tradition and culture being passed down through her. But this was my pleasure and I appreciate this.

CT: Are you second-generation African?

FB: I just say I'm African because our ancestors came from the continent and we were born here in Philadelphia, but I know we have Wolof in our family, we have Haitians we have Jamaicans, so I just call myself African because I understand that as the origin, the root.

NB: Well I'll tell you this, I've never been to Africa but I will say when I visit Jamaica, when I went to Haiti and when I went to Mexico, they all called me "African." I didn't speak. I thought I looked Jamaican [she speaks a little Jamaican] I felt like I was blending but not everyone has blue hair on the other hand, I was "African," everywhere I went. I was in Jamaica several times in different places and different people said, "African" so what am I supposed to say, "No I'm not?" Because they know I'm not Jamaican, but I'm African. So what does that mean in Mexico? The same thing. So I would say, "I'm African." And I'm proud.

CT: Fantastic. Thank you.

FS: You're so welcome and thank you having us a part of this and putting us down in history.

CT: Yes, your story deserves being documented.

[Folosdae and Nzinga's mother speaks from the background] The other part too is that my belief is that we were chosen to do this job. The Creator has a job for everyone and we were chosen to do this job. And I'm very proud of my girls. [In audible] We are part of the cultural community to promote the culture, because without having people to promote the culture, what will happen to it?

FB: It will be lost.

NB: Ask her [Nzinga's mother] what she said when she saw my hair blue.

[Nzinga's mother] I felt like my mother. My mother would always rub my hair and ask me when I was going to cut it. So I didn't quite understand the blue hair but I came to respect it.

NB: I'll tell you what she said. "I said, 'Hey Mom!'" I laid in the middle of her bed. Of course I wasn't living with her at the time. She said, "Is your hair blue?" I said, "Un huh." She said, "Do you like it?" I said, "I love it." She said, "Well then I love it." [laughing] And that was it.

Nia Bey: When I went to my mother and asked her, "Mom, can I...I want to change my name. I said, it's not disrespect to you but I have to have a name that defines me, that says who I am." She looked at me and said, "Uh huh." I said, I want to change my name to Nia, it's N-I-A and it means "purpose." And she said, "Uh huh. Okay." But she gave me permission. And I

didn't just say, "I'm changing my name." Because I don't deal with my mama like that. She's not a fighting woman and she's not argumentative and I respect her. I wanted her to know that I was making changes and I'm going in this direction. Everybody is not going to understand that. I changed everybody's name.

NB: Except for Nzinga.

FS: She changed my name. But thank you so much Candacy that was fun. I was excited to do this.

[we look at photos of Yvette Smalls]